CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

The Foster-Mother's Tale: A Dramatic Fragment

Samuel Taylor Coleridge · *1798 · English original, as hosted (from lyrical-ballads, PG #9622)*

I never saw the man whom you describe. So this dramatic fragment begins. Later: poor wretch!--he read, and read, and read, 'Till his brain turned. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1798, complete as hosted: extracted from Lyrical Ballads (PG #9622), which already has its own collection map. Name the fragment, and the parent. For grades 9–12. Gravity, not a spectacle. Quote this wording, including "whoe'er" and "'Till."

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

How should a school read this file as Coleridge's complete 1798 dramatic fragment, extracted from Lyrical Ballads, beginning with a foster-mother who never saw the man described, rather than as the whole 1798 volume?

"I never saw the man whom you describe. MARIA. 'Tis"
The Foster-Mother's first speech

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's The Foster-Mother's Tale, a Dramatic Fragment, 1798, complete as hosted. It is extracted from the parent volume Lyrical Ballads (PG #9622), which already has its own collection map. It opens: I never saw the man whom you describe. Later: poor wretch!--he read, and read, and read, 'Till his brain turned. For grades 9–12. Gravity, not a spectacle. Name the fragment, and the parent. Quote this wording.

KEY CHARACTERS

The Foster-Mother
Who begins, I never saw the man whom you describe, and who later tells of the youth

Maria
Who speaks with her, and asks what became of him

The learned youth
Who read, and read, and read, till his brain turned, and who later went on ship-board, and was heard of no more

HOW TO BEGIN THIS FRAGMENT

> *"I never saw the man whom you describe. MARIA. 'Tis"*
> The Foster-Mother's first speech

> *"poor wretch!--he read, and read, and read, 'Till his"*
> The youth

Grades 9–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

I Never Saw the Man Whom You Describe

THE FOSTER-MOTHER'S FIRST SPEECH

I never saw the man whom you describe. The fragment begins in a not-seeing, and in a speech already answering someone.

- Keep "I never saw the man whom you describe."
- 9–12.
- A dramatic fragment, not the whole 1798 volume.
- Quote this wording.

> *"I never saw the man whom you describe. MARIA. 'Tis"*
> The Foster-Mother's first speech

02

Now Blessings on the Man

THE FOSTER-MOTHER, AGAIN

Now blessings on the man, whoe'er he be, that joined your names with mine. A blessing is spoken before the later tale of the youth is told.

- Keep "blessings on the man," and "whoe'er" as this file prints it.
- 9–12.
- Quote this wording.
- Name the fragment.

> *"Now blessings on the man, whoe'er he be, That"*
> The Foster-Mother, again

03

He Read, and Read, and Read

THE YOUTH

Poor wretch!--he read, and read, and read. The learning is named as a reading without rest, after he has become a very learned youth.

- Keep "he read, and read, and read," and "poor wretch!" as this file prints it.
- 9–12. Gravity, not a spectacle.
- One movement of the tale, not all of it.
- Quote this wording.

> *"poor wretch!--he read, and read, and read, 'Till his"*
> The youth

04

Till His Brain Turned

THE YOUTH

'Till his brain turned--and ere his twentieth year, he had unlawful thoughts of many things. The turning is named; teach it with gravity, not as a joke or a diagnosis only.

- Keep "'Till his brain turned," as this file prints the apostrophe.
- 9–12. Gravity.
- The tale later goes on ship-board, and he is heard of no more.
- Quote this wording.

> *"Till his brain turned--and ere"*
> The youth

05

A Fragment Extracted from Lyrical Ballads

THE EDITION

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1798, complete as hosted: an individual poem extracted from Lyrical Ballads, Project Gutenberg #9622, which already has its own collection map. Name the fragment, and name the parent. For grades 9–12. Gravity, not a spectacle. Quote this wording, including "whoe'er" and "'Till." One short complete fragment; do not invent what the file does not say.

- Name Coleridge, 1798, and the extraction from Lyrical Ballads.
- 9–12. Gravity.
- A first speech, a blessing, and a reading until the brain turned.
- Quote this English.

> *"I never saw the man whom you describe. MARIA. 'Tis"*
> The Foster-Mother's first speech

A first speech, of a man not seen

A blessing, and names joined

A reading without rest

A going forth, and a not being heard of

A fragment, named as extracted

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 9–12

1. It opens: "I never saw the man whom you describe." Later a blessing: "Now blessings on the man, whoe'er he be."
2. "poor wretch!--he read, and read, and read, 'Till his brain turned." Keep this file's punctuation and apostrophes.
3. This file is Coleridge's complete 1798 dramatic fragment, extracted from the parent volume Lyrical Ballads (PG #9622), which already has its own collection map. Name the fragment, and the parent.
4. For grades 9–12. Gravity, not a spectacle. Quote this wording. One short complete fragment; do not invent what the file does not say.

Quotations are verbatim from the English original, as hosted (from lyrical-ballads, PG #9622), Project Gutenberg #9622, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/coleridge-the-foster-mother-s-tale/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.